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BOOK REVIEWS.

HEDONISTIC THEORIES FROM ARISTIPPUS TO SPENCER. By John Watson, LL.D., Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Queen's College, Kingston, Canada. Glasgow: James MacLehose & Sons, 1895. Pp. xiii., 243.

"In the following pages," says Professor Watson, "an attempt is made to give in familiar and untechnical language a critical account of Hedonistic Theories in their historical succession. I hope that even those who cannot accept my criticisms may find my exposition fairly satisfactory. For my own part, I am convinced, as the result of this and other investigations, that no hedonistic theory can plausibly explain morality without assuming ideas inconsistent with its asserted principle." In successive chapters on the Sophists, Aristippus, Epicurus, Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Bentham, John Stuart Mill, and Herbert Spencer, Professor Watson has given a clear and vigorous account of leading hedonistic moralists. The style deserves high praise, and many good points are aptly stated. Thus, with reference to the opposition of selfish and unselfish activities, he says, "these two tendencies are strictly correlative. Where the capacity for the one is strong, so also is the capacity for the other. 'Great criminals,' as Plato says, 'are perverted heroes.' Gigantic selfishness is possible only to men of vast ability." And, again: "Man is not a mere individual, and he has therefore no purely individualistic tendencies. The desire of self-preservation is not selfish, because life is the primary condition of action, and therefore of moral action."

On the whole, I find myself so much in sympathy with Professor Watson's point of view, that I am inclined to agree with his criticisms as well as with his exposition. But when I try to put myself at the hedonistic point of view, it seems to me that the last word has not always been said. "Hedonism," it is said, "rests on the assumption that the mind may be resolved into a number of individual feelings" (p. 38). This is certainly a common assumption in hedonistic writers, and may at first sight seem natural or even inevitable. But its apparent inevitableness is largely due to the ambiguity of the term "feeling." When "feeling" is said to be the ultimate constituent of mind or even of reality, the reference is to the sensations which enter into our knowledge of the world; when,

on the other hand, "feeling" is said to be the ultimate ground of preference and so of morality, it is the subjective feeling of pleasure which is meant. It may be said, of course, that philosophical sensationalism is the assumption which lies at the root of ethical hedonism; and for this view, again, the opinions of almost any hedonist from Aristippus to Spencer may be quoted. But this logical connection between the two doctrines is not made clear. And, since pleasure and pain are not restricted to impressions of sense, it may be possible to take pleasure for our ultimate test of value in conscious life without making any assumption as to the elements which go to form conscious life. It would have been interesting had this view received some attention from Professor Watson, especially as it is the view of the most consistent—perhaps the only consistent—hedonistic moralist of the present day. A book on Hedonistic Theories which takes no account of Sidgwick's *Ethics* neglects that part of its problem which is of chief importance and difficulty.

"In speaking of the greatest pleasure on the whole," says Professor Watson, "there is introduced a conception that, when carried out, destroys the whole hedonistic basis of the theory, and converts it into its opposite" (p. 66). By this, Professor Watson seems to mean that the conception "greatest pleasure" changes the conception of the end into "permanent satisfaction," which he himself uses as an expression for the end of life. Now, "satisfaction" seems to me a somewhat vague term, but as Professor Watson, following Green, uses it, I take it not to be of the nature of feeling, but rather something nearer the literal sense of the word—the completion or realization of one's nature. This is certainly a very different conception from "pleasure." It can be properly spoken of as permanent, whereas pleasure cannot; but "greatest amount of pleasure" is not therefore without an intelligible meaning. We may fully recognize that each pleasure is transient, and yet hold it desirable that life should provide as frequent a succession as possible of transient feelings of this nature. The tendency of a course of life to produce such feelings may be used as a test of its moral value, and to use this test is hedonism. Professor Watson may hold this to be an imperfect account of the moral ideal, and therein I should agree with him; but I do not think he has given any good argument for regarding it as an impossible account. It does not seem to me that in this matter "the confusion between pleasure and pain as feelings and as objects of thought" (p. 151) always

lies at the door of the hedonist. When Professor Watson contends that "if he [Epicurus] had seriously meant that pleasure is the end, he would have seen that the end cannot be attained unless the intensest pleasure conceivable is secured at every moment of existence" (p. 68), he seems to me to repeat an argument sufficiently disposed of in J. S. Mill's "Utilitarianism."

In a work like the present, intended for the general reader, it must have been difficult to preserve strict accuracy in the account of philosophical doctrines. And some points might still bear revision. The description of Hobbes as combining pure universalism with pure individualism (pp. 74, 88), is not, I think, a happy use of the term "universalism." It is hardly correct to say that, according to the same thinker, "society is based upon the voluntary surrender of the individual will for the common good" (p. 73). It is for his own good (or preservation) that the individual surrenders his will,—a surrender that leads to the common good as well as to his own. The originality of Hobbes's view of the "natural" state of man is, perhaps, over-rated (p. 77), and his classification with the hedonists seems to me to need some further explanation and justification than is given. Again, it is a little too sweeping to say that "Locke is in all things the reverse" of Hobbes (p. 94); it is incorrect to say that "he [Locke] makes all knowledge consist in the passive reception of ideas" (p. 98); and it is no refutation of Locke to say that "the constitution of the state is the work of reason" (p. 97), because the compact or agreement by which, according to Locke, states are formed, is not arbitrary in the sense of irrational, but deliberate, purposeful, and rational. Locke, no doubt, had an imperfect doctrine of the relation of reason both to the data of sense-experience and to the social order, but he did not deny its function in either. Professor Watson also identifies Locke's view, that "the most pressing uneasiness" determines the will with the view that "what a man wills is always what appears to him at the time to be fitted to bring pleasure" (p. 102), although Locke himself takes pains to distinguish the two views on the ground that what appears good or pleasant does not move the will until the want of it raises a felt uneasiness ("Essay," I., xxi. 35). On the whole, however, Professor Watson's exposition seems to me excellent.

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